

**Claims:**

What is claimed is:

- 5           1.     A message routing mechanism for a collaboration system, comprising:  
              a collaboration hub hosting a collaboration space capable of receiving and sending messages between participants; and,  
              a messaging protocol that allows the collaboration hub to determine  
10           the status of a conversation and its participants.
2.     The message routing mechanism of claim 1 wherein routing criteria for a message are specified by the message protocol.
- 15           3.     The message routing mechanism of claim 2 wherein the routing criteria is specified in a message overhead.
4.     The message routing mechanism of claim 3 wherein the collaboration hub includes a repository of participant and conversation  
20           information which can be matched against a message overhead to determine the routing for a message.
5.     The message routing mechanism of claim 4 further comprising  
25           a message router for routing a message depending on the content of the message overhead and the content of the repository.

6. The message routing mechanism of claim 4 further comprising a message filter for filtering a message depending on the content of the message overhead and the content of the repository.

5 7. The message routing mechanism of claim 1 further comprising a messaging bridge for transferring messages from a first collaboration space to a second collaboration space.

10 8. The message routing mechanism of claim 1 further comprising a messaging gateway for transferring messages from a collaboration space to a business messaging system.

15 9. The message routing mechanism of claim 8 wherein the business messaging system is any of an XML, CSML, Ariba NET or equivalent messaging system.

10. The message routing mechanism of claim 1 further comprising a messaging proxy for transferring messages to a messaging device.

20 11. A method for routing messages between participants in a collaboration system, comprising the steps of:

hosting a collaboration space at a collaboration hub, capable of receiving and sending messages between participants; and,  
25 sending messages within the collaboration space using a messaging protocol that allows the collaboration hub to determine the status of a conversation and its participants.

12. The method of claim 11 including specifying the routing criteria for a message by the message protocol.

13. The method of claim 12 including specifying the routing criteria  
5 in the message overhead.

14. The method of claim 13 including storing a repository of participant and conversation information which can be matched against a message overhead to determine routing for a message.  
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15. The method of claim 14 further comprising:  
routing a message depending on the content of the message overhead and the content of the repository.

16. The method of claim 14 further comprising:  
filtering a message depending on the content of the message overhead and the content of the repository.  
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17. The method of claim 11 further comprising:  
20 sending a message via a messaging bridge from a first collaboration space to a second collaboration space.

18. The method of claim 11 further comprising:  
sending a message via a messaging gateway from a collaboration  
25 space to a business messaging system.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the business messaging system is any of an XML, CSML, Ariba NET or equivalent messaging system.

5           20. The method of claim 11 further comprising:  
            sending a message via a messaging proxy from a collaboration space to a messaging device.

10           21. The message routing mechanism of claim 1 including a message router that routes a message and a message filter that filters a message.

15           22. The method of claim 11 including the steps of routing and filtering a message.